

DISA learns 'lessons from loss'

Personnel study, tour site of ill-fated World War II battle

By Hugh C. McBride

Military history, it has been said, is merely the story of wartime's winners.

Don't tell that to the men and women of Defense Information Systems Agency, Europe, though.

In an effort to enhance their ability to manage the military's high-tech communication system, DISA personnel spent two days in November studying one of the darker episodes in America's military history.

Joined by colleagues from the 52nd Signal Battalion and U.S. European Command, the DISA contingent traveled to nearby Herrlisheim, France, to walk the site of a bloody battle waged in the waning days of World War II.

The trip was part of a DISA-sponsored effort to enhance teamwork and learn "how we can make a bigger difference," said Deputy Director Col. Charles Ayala. "The battle of Herrlisheim had lessons that we can benefit from today."

DISA's Bill Wilson, who delivered a two-hour lecture the night before the trip and guided colleagues around the battlefield, said he focused on "the classic errors of the event," including poor intelligence and communication failures.

"For me as a communicator, it provided perspective and stressed the necessity of what we do,"

'Bloody Herrlisheim'

Doomed from the start. Bloody and humiliating. A nightmare.

War historians don't have kind words for the U.S. effort in Herrlisheim.

In the waning days of World War II, troops from the U.S. Army's 12th Armored Division faced off against elements from several German divisions who were intent on capturing nearby Strasbourg.

The Germans ultimately abandoned their effort, but not before inflicting severe losses on the 12th AD.

Because of its proximity to the Battle of the Bulge and the war's end, the losses and lessons of Herrlisheim are often overlooked by historians.

— Hugh C. McBride

Sources:

- www.acu.edu/academics/history/12ad
- www.12tharmoredmuseum.org

said DISA's Capt. Ken Cope.

"We enable command and control," said Maj. Wayne Collins, "and this emphasized the necessity and criticality of our job."

Ayala said the DISA command hopes to conduct similar battlefield tours on a quarterly basis.



photos courtesy DISA



[Above] A tour participant looks over the battlefield from a window in Herrlisheim's Waterworks, which still bears the scars from the battle fought there almost 60 years ago.

[Left] DISA's Bill Wilson lectures on the history of Herrlisheim during a November visit to the site.

Project seeks to preserve letters from war zones

By Sgt. Maj. Larry Stevens
Special to Army News Service

Word is getting out that Andy Carroll gets his kicks reading other people's mail, especially service members' correspondence.

In fact, one of the reasons he spent Nov. 22 at a huge logistics base in Kuwait was to get that word out.

To honor, remember

Carroll is founder and director of the Legacy Project, whose mission, he said, is "to honor and remember America's veterans and personnel on active duty through their own words — the letters they wrote home in times of war."

Carroll also edited "War Letters: Extraordinary Correspondence from American Wars," which features some 200 letters written from the time of the Civil War through Sept. 11, 2001.

Since the publication of that book, he has continued to receive and preserve letters from past conflicts and now wants to add correspondence from service men and women involved in Operation Iraqi Freedom and the global war on terrorism.

Unique insights

"The letters — including e-mails — to and from members of the armed services, as well as their families and friends, are irreplaceable historic documents that give a unique, immediate human insight into war," Carroll said.

The Legacy Project operates with an all-volunteer staff and does not solicit donations, grants, government funding or any other form of financial assistance. The project does not buy letters.

"We ask that anyone who would like to submit any war letters please send a legible photocopy or typed manuscript. We recommend that people not send original material unless they don't want them back or are planning to dispose of them," Carroll said.

He added that nothing will be published without permission, and contributors may feel free to delete names or items they consider sensitive or too personal to include.

Books for troops

Another reason Carroll spent Nov. 22 in Kuwait was to hand out free copies of the latest two books in the Armed Services Edition series.

The current ASE literature program is a revival of a World War II-era project that offered troops free quality reading material.

For more information on the Legacy Project and the Armed Services Edition literature program visit www.warletters.com.